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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita's 2019 Issues in Christian Counseling Conference discusses family issues

By Madison Cresswell

March 1, 2019

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADEPHIA, Ark.— Ouachita Baptist University's Pruet School of Christian Studies hosted the ninth annual Conference on Issues in Christian Counseling on Friday, Feb. 22, on Ouachita's campus. The conference, which was sponsored by Ouachita, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, brought together 170 mental health professionals, social workers, nurses and ministers to discuss the topic of "Family Issues."

"Just a casual glance at statistics shows that families are encountering growing problems today," said Dr. Bill Viser, professor of Christian ministries at Ouachita and conference organizer. "We feel this conference on family issues will definitely help the professionals address these issues in a significant way for the families they see."

"Through the conference, I wanted to gain a better understanding of working with families, especially different types of families," said Alicia Milton, licensed professional counselor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. "In this generation, we have more blended families than we ever had before, and it's something everyone should gain more knowledge about."

In years' past, the conference has given attention to issues in marriage, adolescent issues, alcohol and drug abuse, depression and anxiety, to name a few. The conference is approved by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) for continuing education credit. Eight NBCC hours were available for Licensed Alcohol and Abuse Counselors, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, National Career Counselors (NBCC), Nursing Professionals and Social Work Professionals who attended all approved sessions.

Breakout sessions included "The Impact of Society on the Family," "Ethical Decision-Making and Emotions," "Stronger Together: Trauma Recovery in Family Context," "Truth, Honesty and Openness: The Psychology of Will Shuts Applied to Family Therapy," "Building Healthy Christian Marriages and Families," "Blending Families: Obstacles and Opportunities," "Suffer the Children: Helping Children and Families Navigate Crisis and Trauma," "Working with Families of Individuals Diagnosed with Serious Mental Illness: A Systems Approach" and "Turning 'The Talk' Into a Conversation." Breakout sessions specific to pastors and ministers included "The Family and Technology," "Counseling Children and Families in Crisis," "Helping Families Build Trust," "The Healthy Family" and "Q&A on Topics and Issues Related to Pastoral Counseling."

Guest speakers for the counseling track included Craig Garrett, Larry Henderson, Ian Jones, Elizabeth Kelly, Michael Kelly, Jeff Nave, Aaron New, Gerald Nissley and Kathy Steele. Speakers for the pastoral track included James Barham, Hunter Bramlitt, Derek Brown, Garrick Conner, Aamie Mason, Aaron New and Ryan Ropp.

Dr. Viser led the lunch session, "So You've Been Subpoenaed to Court: What to Know About Being an Expert Witness" and explained how to testify in court as a mental health therapist.

"You will be successful as long as you take cases you believe in, are familiar with your notes and know that you don't have to break therapist confidentiality," he noted.

Students pursuing related fields of study also were invited to attend.

"In class we have talked about the importance of having a strong support system starting with the family," said Blaine Miller, a sophomore Christian studies/Christian ministry major from North Little Rock, Ark. Miller is a student in Dr. Viser's Christian Counseling class at Ouachita and attended the conference. "Recently we have been discussing issues children and teenagers can develop such as anxiety, depression, and anger that can come from growing up in a broken or troubled home. A lot of the information that was taught at the conference relates to what we learn in Dr. Viser's class."

For more information, contact Mary Farley, administrative assistant in Ouachita's Pruet School of Christian Studies, at (870) 245-5599 or farley@m@obu.edu.